IN LUCK AT LAST

BY WALTER BESANT.

CHAPTER I.

WITHIN THREE WEEKS.

PERHAPS the most delightful spot in all London for a second-hand book shop is that occupied by Emblem's in the King's road, Chelsea.

Emblem's is one of two or three shops which stand together, but it differs from its neighbors in many important particulars. For it has no plate-glass, as the others have; nor does it stand like them with open doors; nor does it flare away gas at night; nor is it bright with gilding and fresh paint; nor does it seek to attract notice by posters and bills. On the contrary, it retains the old, small and unpretending panes of glass which it has always had; in the evening it is dimly lighted, and it closes early; its door is always shut, and although the name over the shop is dingy, one feels that a coat of paint, while it would certainly freshen up the place, would take something from its character. For a second-hand bookseller who respects himself must present an exterior which has something of faded splendor, of worn paint and shabbiness. Within the shop books line the walls and cumber the floor. There are an outer and an inner shop; in the former a small table stands among the books, at which Mr. James, the assistant, is always at work cataloguing, when he is not tying up parcels; sometimes even with gum and paste repairing the slighter ravages of time—foxed bindings and close-cut margins no man can repair. In the latter, which is Mr. Emblem's sanctum, there are chairs and a table, also covered with books, a writing-desk, a small safe and a glass case, wherein are secured the most costly books in stock. Emblem's, as must be confessed, is no longer quite what it was in former days; twenty, thirty or forty years ago that glass case was filled with precious treasures. In those days if a man wanted a book of county history, or of genealogy, or of heraldry he knew where was his best chance of finding it, for Emblem's, in its prime and heyday, had its specialty.

But Emblem is now old, and Emblem's shop is no longer what it was to the collector of the last generation.

It was an afternoon in late September, and in this very year of grace, eighteen hundred and eighty-four. The day was as sunny and warm as any of the days of its predecessor Augustus the Gorgeous, but yet there was an autumnal feeling in the air which made itself felt even in the streets where there were no red and yellow Virginia creepers, no square gardens with long trails of mignonette and banks of flowering nasturtiums. In fact, you cannot any where escape the autumnal feeling, which begins about the middle of September. It makes old people think with sadness that the grasshopper is a burden in the land, and that the almond-tree is about to flourish; but the young it fills with a vinous and intoxicated rejoicing, as if the time of feasting, fruits, harvests and young wine, strong and fruity, was upon the world. It made Mr. James—his surname has never been ascertained, but man and boy, Mr. James has been at Emblem's for twenty-five years and more—leave his table where he was preparing the forthcoming catalogue, and go to the open door, where he wasted a good minute and a half in gazing up at the clear sky and down the sunny street. Then he stretched his arms and returned to his work, impelled by the sense of duty rather than by the scourge of necessity, because there was no hurry about the catalogue and most of the books in it were rubbish, and at that season of the year few customers could be expected, and there were no parcels to tie up and send out.

Behind the shop, where had been originally the "back parlor" in the days when every genteel house in Chelsea had both its front and back parlor—the latter for sitting and living in, the former for the reception of company—sat this afternoon the proprietor, the man whose name had stood above the shop for fifty years, the original and only Emblem. He was—nay, he is—for you may still find him in his place, and may make his acquaintance over a county history any day in the King's Road—he is an old man now, advanced in the seventies, who was born before the battle of Waterloo was fought, and can remember Chelsea when it was full of veterans wounded in battles fought long before the Corsican Attila was let loose upon the world. His face wears the peaceful and wise expression which belongs peculiarly to his profession. Other callings make a man look peaceful, but not all other callings make him look wise. Mr. Emblem was born by nature of a calm temperament—otherwise he would not have been happy in his business; a smile lies generally upon his lips, and his eyes are soft and benign; his hair is white, and his face, once ruddy, is pale, yet not shrunk and seamed with furrows as happens to so many old men, but round and firm; like his chin and lips it is clean shaven; he wears a black coat extraordinarily shiny in the sleeve, and a black silk stock just as he used to wear in the thirties when he was young and something of a dandy, and would show himself on a Saturday evening in the pit of Drury Lane; and the stock is fastened behind with a silver buckle. He is, in fact, a delightful old gentleman to look at and pleasant to converse with, and on his brow everyone who can read may see, visibly stamped, the seal of a harmless and honest life. At the contemplation of such a man, one's opinion of humanity is sensibly raised, and even house-agents, plumbers and suburban builders, feel that, after all, virtue may bring with it some reward.

The quiet and warmth of the afternoon, unbroken to his accustomed ear, as it would be to a stranger, by the murmurous roll of London, made him sleepy. In his hand he held a letter which he had been reading for the hundredth time, and which he knew by heart every word; and as his eyes closed he went back in imagination to a passage in the past which it recalled.

He stood, in imagination, upon the deck of a sailing ship—an emigrant ship. The year was eighteen hundred and sixty-four, a year when very few were tempted to try their fortunes in a country torn by civil war. With him were his daughter and his son-in-law, and they were come to bid the latter farewell.

"My dear—my dear!" cried the wife, in her husband's arms, "come what may, I will join you in a year."

Her husband shook his head sadly.

"They do not want me here," he said; "the work goes into stronger and rougher hands. Perhaps over there we may get on better, and besides, it seems an opening."

If the kind of work which he wanted was given to stronger and rougher hands than as in England, far more would it be the case in young and rough America. It was journalistic work—writing work—that he wanted; and he was a gentleman, a scholar, and a creature of retired and refined tastes and manners. There are, perhaps, some still living who have survived the tempestuous life of the ordinary Fleet street "newspaper man" of twenty or thirty years ago; perhaps one or two among these remember Claude Aglen—but he was so short a time with them that it is not likely; those who do remember him will understand that the way to success, rough and thorny for all, for such as Aglen was impossible.

"But you will think every day of little Iris!" said his wife. "Oh, my dear, if I were only going with you. And but for me you would be at home with your father, well and happy."

Then in his dream, which was also a memory, the old man saw how the young husband kissed and comforted his wife.

"My dear," said Claude, "if it were not for you, what happiness could I have in the world! Courage, my wife, courage and hope. I shall think of you and of Iris all day and all night until we meet again."

And so they parted and the ship sailed away.

The old man opened his eyes and looked about him. It was a dream.

"It was twenty years ago," he said, "and Iris was a baby in arms. Twenty years ago, and he never saw his wife again. Never again! Because she died," he added after a pause; "my Alice died."

He shed no tears, being so old that the time of tears was well-nigh past—at seventy-five the eyes are drier than at forty, and one is no longer surprised or disappointed, and seldom even angry, whatever happens.

But he opened the letter in his hand and read it again mechanically. It was written on thin foreign paper, and the creases of the folds had become gaping rents. It was dated September, 1866, just 18 years back.

"When you read these lines," the letter said, "I shall be in the silent land, whither Alice, my wife, has gone before me. It would be a strange thing only to think upon this journey which lies before me, and which I must take alone, had I time left for thinking. But I have not. I may last a week, or I may die in a few hours. Therefore, to the point.

"In one small thing we deceived you, Alice and I—my name is not Aglen at all; we took that name for certain reasons. Perhaps we were wrong, but we thought that as we were quite poor, and likely to remain poor, it would be well to keep our secret to ourselves. Forgive us both this suppression of the truth. We were made poor by our own voluntary act and deed, and because I married the only woman I loved.

"I was engaged to a girl whom I did not love. We had been brought up like brother and sister together, but I did not love her, though I was engaged to her. In breaking this engagement I angered my father. In marrying Alice I angered him still more.

"I now know that he has forgiven me; he forgave me on his death-bed; he revoked his former will and made me his sole heir—just as if nothing had happened to destroy his old affection—subject to one condition—viz., that the girl to whom I was first engaged should receive the whole income until I, or my heirs, should return to England in order to claim the inheritance.

"It is strange. I die in a wooden shanty, in a little western town, the editor of a miserable little country paper. I have not money enough even to bury me, and yet, if I were at home, I might be called a rich man, as men go. My little Iris will be an heiress. At the very moment when I learn that I am my father's heir, I am struck down by fever; and now I know that I shall never get up again.

"It is strange. Yet my father sent me his forgiveness, and my wife is dead, and the wealth that has come is useless to me. Wherefore, nothing now matters much to me, and I know that you will hold my last wishes sacred.

"I desire that Iris shall be educated as well and thoroughly as you can afford; keep her free from rough and rude companions; make her understand that her father was a gentleman of ancient family: this knowledge will, perhaps, help to give her self-respect. If any misfortune should fall upon you, such as the loss of health or wealth, give the papers enclosed to a trustworthy solicitor, and bid him act as is best in the interests of Iris. If, as I hope, all will go well with you, do not open the papers until my child's twenty-first birthday; do not let her know until then that she is going to be rich; on her twenty-first birthday, open the papers and bid her claim her own.

"To the woman I wronged—I know not whether she has married or not—bid Iris carry my last message of sorrow at what has happened. I do not regret, and I have never regretted, that I married Alice. But I gave her pain, for which I have never ceased to grieve. I have been punished for this breach of faith. You will find among the papers an account of all the circumstances connected with this engagement. There is also in the packet my portrait, taken when I was a lad of 16; give her that as well; there is the certificate of my marriage, my register of baptism, that of Iris's baptism, my signet ring——" "His arms"—the old man interrupted his reading—"his arms were: quarterly: first and fourth, two roses and a boar's head, erect; second and third, gules and fesse between—between—but I cannot remember what it was between——" He went on reading: "My father's last letter to me; Alice's letters, and one or two from yourself. If Iris should unhappily die before her twenty-first birthday, open these papers, find out from them the owner's name and address, seek her out, and tell her that she will never now be disturbed by ony claimants to the estate."

The letter ended here abruptly, as if the writer had designed to and more, but was prevented by death.

For there was a postscript, in another hand, which stated: "Mr. Aglen died November 25th, 1866, and is buried in the cemetery of Johnson City, Ill."

The old man folded the letter carefully, and laid it on the table. Then he rose and walked across the room to the safe, which stood with open door in the corner farthest from the fireplace. Among its contents was a packet sealed and tied up in red tape, endorsed: "For Iris. To be given to her on her twenty-first birthday. From her father."

"It will be her twenty-first birthday," he said, "in three weeks. Then I must give her the packet. So—so—with the portrait of her father, and his marriage certificate." He fell into a fit of musing, with the papers in his hand. "She will be safe, whatever happens to me; and as for me, if I lose her—of course I shall lose her. Why, what will it matter? Have I not lost all, except Iris? One must not be selfish. Oh, Iris, what a surprise—what a surprise I have in store for you!"

He placed the letter he had been reading within the tape which fastened the bundle, so that it should form a part of the communication to be made on Iris's birthday.

"There," he said, "now I shall read this letter no more. I wonder how many times I have read it within the last eighteen years, and how often I have wondered what the child's fortune would be? In three weeks—in three short weeks. Oh, Iris, if you only knew!"

He put back the letters and the packet, locked the safe and resumed his seat.

The red-eyed assistant, still gumming and

"There," said Mr. Emblem, "I shall read this letter no more."

pasting his slips with punctilious regard to duty, had been following his master's movements with curiosity.

"Counting his investments again as usual," Mr. James murmured. "Ah, and adding 'em up! Always at it. Oh, what a trade it must have been once!"

Just then there appeared in the door a gentleman. He was quite shabby, and even ragged in his dress, but he was clearly a gentleman. He was no longer young; his shoulders were bent, and he had the unmistakable stamp and carriage of a student.

"Guv'nor's at home," said the assistant briefly.

The visitor walked into the sanctum. He had under his arm half-a-dozen volumes, which, without a word, he laid before Mr. Emblem, and untied the string.

"You ought to know this book," he said without further introduction.

Mr. Emblem looked doubtfully at the visitor.

"You sold it to me twenty-five years ago," he went on, "for five pounds."

"I did. And I remember now. You are Mr. Frank Farrar. Why, it is twenty-five years ago!"

"I have bought no more books for twenty years and more," he replied.

"Sad—sad! Dear me—tut, tut!—bought no books! And you, Mr. Farrar, once my best customer. And now—you do not mean to say that you are going to sell—that you actually want to sell—this precious book?"

"I am selling, one by one, all my books," replied the other with a sigh. "I am going downhill, Emblem, fast."

"Oh, dear, dear, dear!" replied the bookseller. "This is very sad. One cannot bear to think of the libraries being dispersed and sold off. And now yours, Mr. Farrar! Really, yours! Must it be?"

"'Needs must,'" Mr. Farrar said with a sickly smile, "needs must when the devil drives. I have parted with half my books already. But I thought you might like to have this set, because they were once your own."

"So I should"—Mr. Emblem laid a loving hand upon the volumes—"so I should, Mr. Farrar, but not from you; not from you, sir. Why, you were almost my best customer—I think almost my very best—thirty years ago, when my trade was better than it is now. Yes, you gave me five pounds—or was it five pounds ten?—for this very work. And it is worth twelve pounds now—I assure you it is worth twelve pounds, if it is worth a penny."

"Will you give me ten pounds for it, then?" cried the other eagerly; "I want the money badly."

"No, I can't; but I will send you to a man who can and will. I do not speculate now; I never go to auctions. I am old, you see. Besides, I am poor. I will not buy your book, but I will send you to a man who will give you ten pounds for it, I am sure, and then he will sell it for fifteen." He wrote the address on a slip of paper. "Why, Mr. Farrar, if an old friend, so to speak, can put the question, why in the world——"

"The most natural thing," replied Mr. Farrar with a cold laugh; "I am old, as I told you, and the younger men get all the work. That is all. Nobody wants a genealogist and antiquary."

"Dear me, dear me! Why, Mr. Farrar, I remember now; you used to know my poor son-in-law, who is dead eighteen years since. I was just reading the last letter he ever wrote me, just before he died. You used to come here and sit with him in the evening. I remember now. So you did.

"Thank you for your good will," said Mr. Farrar. "Yes, I remember your son-in-law. I knew him before his marriage."

"Did you! Before his marriage! Then—" He was going to add, "Then you can tell me his real name," but he paused, because it is a pity ever to acknowledge ignorance, and especially ignorance in such elementary matters as your son-in-law's name.

So Mr. Emblem checked himself.

"He ought to have been a rich man," Mr. Farrar continued; "but he quarrelled with his father, who cut him off with a shilling, I suppose."

Then the poor scholar, who could find no market for his learned papers, tied up his books again and went away with hanging head.

"Ugh!" Mr. James, who had been listening, groaned as Mr. Farrar passed through the door. "Ugh! Call that a way of doing business? Why, if it had been me, I'd have bought the book off of the old chap for a couple o' pounds, I would. Aye, or a sov, so seedy he is, and wants money so bad. And I know who'd have given twelve pound for it, in the trade, too. Call that carrying on business? He may well add up his investments every day, if he can afford to chuck such chances. Ah, but he'll retire soon." His fiery eyes brightened, and his face glowed with the joy of anticipation. "He must retire before long."

There came another visitor. This time it was a lanky boy, with a blue bag over his shoulder and a notebook and pencil-stump in his hand. He nodded to the assistant as to an old friend with whom one may be at ease, set down his bag, opened his notebook, and nibbled his stump. Then he read aloud, with a comma or semicolon between each, a dozen or twenty titles. They were the names of the books which his employer wished to pick up. The red-eyed assistant listened, and shook his head. Then the boy, without another word, shouldered his bag and departed on his way to the next second-hand book shop.

He was followed, at a decent interval, by another caller. This time it was an old gentleman who opened the door, put in his head, and looked about him with quick and suspicious glance. At sight of the assistant he nodded and smiled in the most friendly way possible, and came in.

"Good morning, Mr. James; good morning, my friend. Splendid weather. Pray don't disturb yourself. I am just having a look round—only a look round, you know. Don't move, Mr. James."

He addressed Mr. James, but he was looking at the shelves as he spoke, and, with the habit of a book-hunter, taking down the volumes, looking at the title-pages and replacing them; under his arm he carried a single volume in old leather binding.

Mr. James nodded his head, but did disturb himself; in fact, he rose with a scowl upon his face, and followed this polite old gentleman all round the shop, placing himself close to his elbow. One might almost suppose that he suspected him, so close and assiduous was his assistance. But the visitor, accepting these attentions as if they were customary, and the result of high breeding, went slowly round the shelves, taking down book after book, but buying none. Presently he smiled again, and said that he must be moving on, and very politely thanked Mr. James for his kindness.

"Nowhere," he was so good as to say, "does one get so much personal kindness and attention as at Emblem's. Good morning, Mr. James; good morning, my friend."

Mr. James grunted, and closed the door after him.

"Ugh!" he said with disgust, "I know you; I know your likes. Want to make your set complete—eh? Want to sneak one of our books to do it with, don't you? Ah!" He looked into the back shop before he returned to his paste and his slips. "That was Mr. Potts, the great Queen Anne collector, sir. Most notorious book-snatcher in all London, and the most barefaced. Wanted our fourth volume of the Athenian Oracle. I saw his eyes reached out this way, and that way, and always resting on that volume. I saw him edging along to the shelf. Got another odd volume just like it in his wicked old hand, ready to change when I wasn't looking."

"Ah," said Mr. Emblem, waking up from his dream of Iris and her father's letter; "Ah, they will try it on. Keep your eyes open, James."

"No thanks, as usual," grumbled Mr. James as he returned to his gum and his sciasors. "Might as well have left him to snatch the book."

Here, however, James was wrong, because it is the first duty of an assistant to hinder and obstruct the book-snatcher, who carries on his work by methods of crafty and fraudulent exchange rather than by plain theft, which is a mere brutal way. For, first, the book-snatcher marks his prey; he finds the shop which has a set containing the volume which is missing in his own set; next, he arms himself with a volume which closely resembles the one he covets, and then, on pretence of turning over the leaves, he watches his opportunity to effect an exchange, and goes away rejoicing, his set complete. No collector, as is very well known, whether of books, coins, pictures, medals, fans, scarabs, book-plates, autographs, stamps, or anything else, has any conscience at all. Anybody can cut out slips and make a catalogue, but it requires a sharp assistant, with eyes all over his head like a spider, to be always on guard against this felonious and unscrupulous collector.

Next there came two school boys together who asked for and bought a crib to Virgil, and then a girl who wanted some cheap French reading book. Just as the clock began to strike five Mr. Emblem lifted his head and looked up. The shop door opened, and there stepped in, rubbing his shoes on the mat as if he belonged to the house, an elderly gentleman of somewhat singular appearance. He wore a fez cap, but was otherwise dressed as an Englishman—in black frock coat, that is, buttoned up—except that his feet were encased in black cloth shoes, so that he went noiselessly. His hair was short and white, and he wore a small white beard; his skin was a rather dark brown; he was, in fact, a Hindoo, and his name was Lala Roy.

He nodded gravely to Mr. James and walked into the back shop.

"It goes well," he asked, "with the buying and the selling?"

"Surely, Lala, surely."

"A quiet way of buying and selling; a way fit for one who meditates," said the Hindoo, looking round. "Tell me, my friend, what ails the child? Is she sick?"

"The child is well, Lala."

"Her mind wandered this morning. She failed to perceive a simple method which I tried to teach her. I feared she might be ill."

"She is not ill, my friend, but I think her mind is troubled."

"She is a woman. We are men. There is nothing in the world that is able to trouble the mind of the philosopher."

"Nothing," said Mr. Emblem manfully, as if he, too, was a Disciple. "Nothing, is there now?"

The stoutness of the assertion was sensibly impaired by the question.

"Not poverty, which is a shadow; nor pain, which passes; nor the loss of woman's love, which is a gain; nor fall from greatness—nothing. Nevertheless," his eyes did look anxious in spite of his philosophy, "this trouble of the child—will it be soon be over?"

"I hope this evening," said Mr. Emblem. "Indeed I am sure that it will be finised this evening."

"If the child had a mother, or a brother, or any protectors but ourselves, my friend, we might leave her to them. But she has nobody but you and me. I am glad that she is not ill."

He left Mr. Emblem, and passing through the door of communication between house and shop, went noiselessly up the stairs.

One more visitor—unusual for so many to call on a September afternoon. This time it was a youngish man of thirty or so, who stepped into the shop with an air of business and, taking no notice at all of the assistant, walked swiftly into the back shop, and shut the door behind him.

"I thought so," murmured Mr. James. "After he's been counting up his investments, his lawyer calls. More investments."

Mr. David Chalker was a solicitor and, according to his friends, who were proud of him, a sharp practitioner. He was, in fact, one of those members of the profession who, starting with no connection, have to make business for themselves. This, in London, they do by encouraging the county court, setting neighbors by the ears, lending money in small sums, fomenting quarrels, charging commissions, and generally making themselves a blessing and a boon to the district where they reside. But chiefly Mr. Chalker occupied himself with lending money.

"Now, Mr. Emblem," he said, not in a menacing tone, but as one who warns; "now, Mr. Emblem."

"Now, Mr. Chalker," the bookseller repeated mildly.

"What are you going to do for me?"

"I got your usual notice," the old bookseller began, hesitating, "six months ago."

"Of course you did. Three fifty is the amount. Three fifty, exactly."

"Just so. But I am afraid I am not prepared to pay off the bill of sale. The interest, as usual, will be ready."

"Of course. But this time the principal must be ready, too."

"Can't you get another client to find the money?"

"No, I can't. Money is tight, and your security, Mr. Emblem, isn't so good as it was."

"The furniture is there, and so is the stock."

"Furniture wears out; as for the stock—who knows what that is worth? All your books together may not be worth fifty pounds, for what I know."

"Then what am I to do?"

"Find the money yourself. Come, Mr. Emblem, everybody knows—your grandson himself told me—all the world knows—you've been for years saving up for your granddaughter. You told Joe only six months ago—you can't deny it—that whatever happened to you she would be well off."

Mr. Emblem did not deny the charge. But he ought not to have told this to his grandson, of all people in the world.

"As for Joe," Mr. Chalker went on, "you are going to do nothing for him. I know that. But is it business-like, Mr. Emblem, to waste good money which you might have invested for your granddaughter?"

"You do not understand, Mr. Chalker. You really do not, and I cannot explain. But about this bill of sale—never mind my granddaughter."

"You, the aforesaid Richard Emblem"—Mr. Chalker began to recite, without commas—"have assigned to me David Chalker aforesaid his executors administrators and assigns all and singular the several chattels and things specifically described in the schedule hereto annexed by way of security for the payment of the sum of three hundred and fifty pounds and interest thereon at the rate of eight per cent. per annum."

"Thank you, Mr. Chalker. I know all that."

"You can't complain, I'm sure. It is five years since you borrowed the money."

"It was fifty pounds and a box of old law books out of your office, and I signed a bill for a hundred."

"You forget the circumstances."

"No, I do not. My grandson was a rogue. One does not readily forget that circumstance. He was also your friend, I remember."

"And I held my tongue."

"I have had no more money from you, and the sum has become three hundred and fifty."

"Of course you don't understand law, Mr. Emblem. How should you? But we lawyers don't work for nothing. However, it isn't what you got, but what I am to get. Come, my good sir, it's cutting off your nose to spite your face. Settle and have done with it, even if it does take a little slice off your granddaughter's fortune. Now look here"—his voice became persuasive—"why not take me into your confidence? Make a friend of me. You want advice; let me advise you. I can get you good investments—far better than you know anything of—good and safe investments—at six certain, and sometimes seven and even eight per cent. Make me your man of business—come now. As for this trumpery Bill of Sale—this trifle of three fifty, what is it to you? Nothing—nothing. And as for your intention to enrich your granddaughter, and cut off your grandson with a shilling, why I honor you for it—there, though he was my friend. For Joe deserves it thoroughly. I've told him so, mind. You ask him. I've told him so a dozen times. I've said: 'The old man's right, Joe.' Ask him if I haven't."

This was very expansive, but somehow Mr. Emblem did not respond.

Presently, however, he lifted his head.

"I have three weeks still."

"And if I do not find the money within three weeks?"

"Why—but of course you will—but if you do not—I suppose there will be only one thing left to do—realize the security, sell up—sticks and books and all."

"Thank you, Mr. Chalker. I will look round me, and—and—do my best. Good-day, Mr. Chalker."

"The best you can do, Mr. Emblem," returned the solicitor, "is to take me as your adviser. You trust David Chalker."

"Take me as your adviser. You trust David Chalker."

"Thank you. Good-day, Mr. Chalker."

On his way out Mr. Chalker stopped for a moment and looked round the shop.

"How's business?" he asked of the assistant.

"Dull, sir," replied Mr. James. "He throws it all away and neglects his chances. Naturally, being so rich——"

"So rich, indeed," the solicitor echoed.

"It will be bad for his successor," Mr. James went on, thinking how much he should himself like to be that successor. "The good will won't be worth half what it ought to be, and the stock is just falling to pieces."

Mr. Chalker looked about him again thoughtfully, and opened his mouth as if about to ask a question, but said nothing. He remembered, in time, that the shopman was not likely to know the amount of his master's capital or investments.

"There isn't a book even in the glass case that's worth a five-pound note," continued Mr. James, whispering, "and he don't look about for purchases any more. Seems to have lost his pluck."

Mr. Chalker returned to the back shop.

"Within three weeks, Mr. Emblem," he repeated and then departed.

Mr. Emblem sat in his chair. He had to find three hundred and fifty pounds in three weeks. No one knew better than himself that this was impossible. Within three weeks! But, in three weeks he would open the packet of letters and give Iris her inheritance. At least, she would not suffer. As for himself—— He looked round the little back shop and tried to recall the fifty years he had spent there, the books he had bought and sold, the money which had slipped through his fingers, the friends who had come and gone. Why, as for the books, he seemed to remember them every one—his joy in the purchase, his pride in possession, and his grief at letting them go. All the friends gone before him, his trade sunk to nothing.

"Yet," he murmured, "I thought it would last my time."

But the clock struck six. It was his tea time. He rose mechanically, and went up stairs to Iris.

CHAPTER II.

FOX AND WOLF.

Mr. James, left to himself, attempted, in accordance with his daily custom, to commit a dishonorable action.

That is to say, he first listened carefully to the retreating footsteps of his master, as he went up the stairs; then he left his table, crept stealthily into the back shop, and began to pull the drawers, turn the handle of the safe, and try the desk. Everything was carefully locked. Then he turned over all the papers on the table, but found nothing that contained the information he looked for. It was his daily practice thus to try the locks, in hope that some day the safe, or the drawers, or the desk, would be left open by accident, when he might be able to solve a certain problem, the doubt and difficulty of which sore let and hindered him—namely, of what extent, and where placed, were those great treasures, savings and investments which enabled his master to be careless over his business. It was, further, customary with him to be thus frustrated and disappointed. Having briefly, therefore, also in accordance with his usual custom, expressed his disgust at this want of confidence between master and man, Mr. James returned to his paste and scissors.

About a quarter past six the shop door was cautiously opened and a head appeared, which looked round stealthily. Seeing nobody about except Mr. James, the head nodded, and presently, followed by its body, stepped into the shop.

[To be Continued.]

FROM JACKSON.

A Chicago Firm Sued by a Bolton Lawyer for $13,500--A Compromise With the Street Railroad--The Colored State Fair.

Special to Commercial Herald.

JACKSON, Sept. 24.—In the case of the Miazza heirs against Helm, Yerger and Green, the chancery court dismissed the bill so far as Helm and Yerger are concerned, but directs an account to ascertain if any surplus over and above the debt due to J. & T. Green by Miazza, deceased, remains in the hands of the trustees making the sale.

The City Railroad Company and the board of mayor and aldermen have entered into a compromise, by which the former agrees to place its track in the middle of the road. The authorities agree to increase the width of the new iron bridge six feet, to enable it to pass over.

The chancery court has been engaged most of this week in a tedious law suit, including the question as to whether or not Thos. Watson is indebted to E. E. Baldwin and H. S. Austin, all of Chicago, for $13,000. The case gets into Mississippi courts by an attachment levied on lands of Watsons in this State.

The fair to commence here on Oct. 26th, under the auspices of the Colored Fair Association promises to be a very interesting exhibition. A varied and attractive premium list is now being prepared. Our citizens are taking commendable interest in the enterprise.

The Race for the Cape May Cup.

SANDY HOOK, Sept. 26.—The committee boat, Luckanbach, started the yachts in the race for the Cape May cup off the point of Sandy Hook this p.m. at 3:50. The preparatory signal was given. The Genesta and the Dauntless were the only contestants. The racers stood off and on under plain lower sails and gaff top sails, ready for the order to start, which was given at four o'clock. Thirty seconds later the Genesta had crossed the line, followed in three minutes and fifteen seconds by the Dauntless. The wind was blowing from the south at the rate of fifteen miles an hour. The weather was fair and there was a light sea.

SHOULD Mr. Foraker not be elected in Ohio, all the rivers will dry up and the sun will set every day at 1 o'clock p.m.